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The Night the World Ended
November 9-10,1938
The Trumpet of Doom

"Survivor testimony is in need of interpretation."
Geoffrey Hartman, co-founder of
the Fortunoff Archive at Yale University

No matter how many books are written, how many interviews are recorded, or how many movies are made, no one can now imagine the sense of terror and torment which engulfed our lives during the entire twelve year period of the Third Reich. The persecution came in waves, a steady ebb and flow, intensifying until the final murder of millions. The measures increased in severity and became organized, more clearly focussed when our *Ostjuden* friends and neighbors were deported 'East' on October 27, 1938, indicating unmistakably then what was ahead for all of us before long.

Following these deportations and after the assassination of *Legationsrat* Ernst vom Rath in Paris[3], most every Jewish person inside the *Reich* trembled with fear. Excited telephone messages flew back and forth between our many friends in Wiesbaden, in Mainz, Frankfurt and, especially, from our home to my maternal grandparents in Gießen, discussing the general looting, vandalism, and the burning of synagogues which began in Hesse on the seventh and eighth of November, well before Josef Goebbels called on the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) , *Sicherheits Dienst* (SD)[4] and *Schutz Staffel* (SS)[5] units to step into action.

Most of the destructive *Kristallnacht* work was organized by the SA. These men received their marching orders in the middle of the night from their respective superiors.

3 On November 7, 1938 by Herschel Grynszpan; the German ambassador at the time was Johannes von Welzeck

4 storm troopers , security service and protective batallion

According to some current scholars, the terror *Aktionen* of *Kristallnacht* on November 9th and 10th 1938, mark the beginning of the Final Solution. If this were so, it would be extremely difficult to explain and to understand the many political-racial murders which started with the *Machtergreifung* (Hitler's assumption of power) in January 1933[6]. These were the true beginning. They were part and parcel of the official *Judenpolitik*, of which the Final Solution in the 1940s was but the successful end. Such a view would absolve the SA from this organization's substantial culpability in the early killing and terror activities.

In November 1938, I was 13 years old and lived with my parents and my older brother Paul in a large house

picture

on one of the parade streets in Wiesbaden (built when Kaiser Wilhelm and the local city planners were intent on creating a fitting backdrop for the Emperor's ceremonial entrances into the city). Wiesbaden is situated close to the romantic Rhine valley. The most picturesque stretch along the Rhine is situated between Mainz and Koblenz, where the river flows almost due west and where castles abound, vinyards terrace the hillside, and commercial and pleasure ships churn the waters.

One of the most famous rock formations is the 'Lorelei' mountain where, according to legend, a lovely maiden sits and combs her golden hair, singing melancholy melodies. Fishermen are fascinated by her songs and transfixed by her beauty. They fail to navigate their small boats around the hidden rocks and drown. The 19th century Jewish poet Heinrich Heine wrote a poem *'Ich weiß nicht was soll es bedeuten'* which was set to music and immediately became a popular song. The National Socialist's efforts at cleansing German

6 See details of just one such politically/racially motivated murder of Julius Frank from Dolgesheim in a later chapter

literature from Jewish authors and their 'degenerate' influence failed miserably where this song was concerned. The poem and the song remained part of German literature and was a consistently popular song, but now the author of the poem was listed as 'unknown' or 'anonymous', respectively, in order to avoid having to acknowledge and honor a Jew.

Today's hectic automobile traffic still rolls over the highway built by *Baurat Ignatz* Opfermann, an illustrious member of several generations of successful architects (who served at the courts of the Archbishop of Mainz and of the *Erzherzog* [archduke] of Darmstadt). The Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte of France ordered Baurat Opfermann to enlarge this old trade route prior to his invasion of Russia.

In the mid 1800s, the catholic *Baurat* Ignatz Opfermann

picture

built the Lutheran church in Eich

picture

just a few blocks from the large home of my Jewish grandfather Jacob Guthmann.

picture

Baurat Ignatz Opfermann also built the orthodox synagogue in Mainz *Margarethengasse,* as well as many churches, schools, hospitals and other public buildings in the area.

picture (map)

My father's law office occupied the first floor of our house in Wiesbaden. Our family's apartment was on the second parlor floor. In the fall of 1938, Grandfather Jacob Guthmann lived on the third floor in a two-bedroom apartment with his housekeeper, Senny Weißmüller.

picture

In fall 1938 the Jews in Germany were trying to recover from the shock of the German government's sudden, forceful and cruel deportation of our Polish, Polish-born, and stateless Jewish brothers and sisters to a no-man's-land[7] near the German-Polish border on October 27,1938. This measure had been planned by the *Reichsaußenministerium,* the Foreign Ministry under the leadership of Hitler's foreign minister Joachim von Ribbentrop

picture

in response to the Polish government's threat that they would cancel the passports of all those Polish citizens who had been living in exile for extended periods of time.

At the time, Herschel Grynszpan was a Jewish teenager living with an uncle in Paris. Quite possibly, he was upset over his parents' deportation from his native Hamburg to Poland. He went to the German embassy and shot *Herr Legationsrat* Ernst vom Rath in his office. Vom Rath was a minor consular official with whom, according to some, Grynszpan may have had a personal relationship.

The *Ostjuden,* as they were commonly called in oder to differentiate them from the assimilated German Jews, were not integrated into the German population. They lived very much apart from every one else's daily

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[7] Since the turn of the century, there had been a steady immigration to Germany from the East, mostly from Poland, the Baltic countries, and from Russia, due to the pogroms (so romantically described in the movie 'Fiddler on the Roof') , during and after World War One. While serving as a soldier in the Kaiser's army on Germany's Eastern Front, my father had organized a private self-help system during World War One. From close opbservation, he was initimately acquainted with the economic plight of these people in their native country.

These 'recent' immigrants to Germany were often referred to as *Ostjuden* and differed in many ways from their assimilated German Jewish neighbors whose recorded history spans a thousand years, traced by some to the Roman invasion of *Germania* and *Gaul* and the time of Julius Caesar.

However, by 1938 there were many German-born *Ostjuden.* This deportation in October 1938 differed from the later deportations in the 1940s in that there were no plans made beyond the border crossing. The hapless victims were literally 'dumped' into the fields, into mud and rain...because neither country (neither Germany nor Poland) wanted them.

life. Their sudden arrest and cruel deportation came as a shock to all. Suddenly, Jews inside the German *Reich* became concerned about their own personal safety. There were ominous storm signals of events to come everywhere. The synagogues in many towns in Hesse, near Wiesbaden, were desecrated and burned. Early in the morning of November 10th, I went to school, the *Lyzeum Eins* on *Adolf Hitler Platz,* just as I did on any other day.

picture

I was glad to get out of the house, away from all this vague talk about undefined, threatening personal danger that dominated the conversation of the adults. My family and their friends were beginning to get on my nerves with their fears and rumors about 'serious harm lurking everywhere'. I tried not to listen to such talk and hoped to settle for a day of relative normalcy in the familiar and, I thought, unthreatening environment at my school. Things were not entirely peaceful there either, but I felt that I could deal with abuse from some of the teachers and from some of my classmates. It wasn't like this nameless, formless fear that had the adults at home in its grip.

My father boarded an early morning train to Oppenheim, a small town of minor importance to the winegrowing industry along the *Rhein* not far away. He was to represent one of his Jewish clients, litigant in a civil lawsuit in that town's lower court. Nothing major: it was a dispute between Dad's client and a non-Jewish debtor. A vintner in the region owed a Jewish businessman money but refused to pay. Soon such disputes would be settled

in a very different manner.[8] After the court hearing, Dad intended to stop for lunch with his new brother-in-law, Berthold Hirsch, and Berthold's Christian wife Kättel who were then living in nearby Dienheim. Like my father, Berthold Hirsch was a much decorated veteran of World War One. He was a '100% disabled war veteran', an amputee, having lost a leg fighting for the Fatherland during the "War to End All Wars" 1914-1918. Since he was unable to work, Kättel tried to supplement Berthold's small government pension by doing occasional dressmaking and alteration jobs at their modest, rented two-story home.

By fall 1938, my friend Ellen Kahn and I were the only Jewish students left at the *Lyzeum Eins* on *Adolf Hitler Platz*, a public high school for girls, one of two such institutions of higher learning in town. The *Lyzeum Zwei* on *Boseplatz* no longer carried any Jewish pupils on its student roster. Like almost all other German schools, they could boast to be *judenrein* (purged of Jews), as all of Germany was to be soon. Many Jewish pupils had been able to escape from their home country or, if they still lived in town, they had

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[8] in 1938, there were approximately 1700 Jewish lawyers in Germany. Until November 1938, fifteen Jewish attorney-colleagues were admitted to the bar and practiced their profession in Wiesbaden. According to a new edict dated September 27, 1938, only one of these was to be allowed to work in the area after 11-30-1938. He was to use a newly invented (demeaning) job description '*Konsulent*' and was restricted to represent Jewish clients only. His function was to represent Jews vis-a-vis the German authorities, to assist with the --then-- strongly encouraged emigration, with individual tax questions, and represent the Jewish partners in the many divorce proceedings between Christian and Jewish marriage partners. The numbers of these divorce procedings, initiated by the Christian partners, were increasing at a rapid rate.
Soon all of them, Jewish clients and *Konsulent* -attorneys would be dead.

To this day (1999), even some post-War German Holocaust researchers refer to these professionals as '*Rechtskonsulent*', a title which applies to non-lawyer/tax consultants, often quite untrained non-professionals, thereby perpetuating the Nazi insult.

transferred to the Alternative Jewish School on Mainzer Straße[9] ·

picture

Some other Jewish children from Wiesbaden were attending another Alternative Jewish School in Mainz, across the Rhine which had opened its doors earlier than the one in Wiesbaden. All these friends were able to study in relative peace, not having to contend with harassment and antisemitic attacks from fellow students and from teachers. I was well aware of this difference and envied them. Ellen's father and my Dad were veterans of World War One. For this reason, we were still permitted to attend a public school -- for now. Admittedly, the protected environment at the Alternative Jewish School would have been preferable, and there were times when I was jealous of my Jewish friends who attended this institution. But the academic standards at that new school were not well established. Among other distractions, classroom work was frequently interrupted by students or by teachers departing the country, as soon as their respective efforts at emigration were successful and they could leave Germany and the dangers which lurked everywhere.

These schools provided practical teaching, alongside the three Rs, such as home economics, gardening, electric appliance repair and carpentry. They also offered lessons in Hebrew/Ivrit, which would be of great importance to students planning to immigrate to Palestine. Such subjects did not seem terribly important to me then. I felt that I was receiving a

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9 The law against overcrowding of German schools and universities of April 25, 1933 had placed all Jewish pupils outside the German educational system. Only children of Jewish veterans of World War One were permitted to attend a public school, though there was a strong official trend to discourage even such exceptions.

The Wiesbaden Alternative Jewish School was officially opened on May18, 1934 -- after a year's intensive efforts on the part of the secular leadership of the large Michelsberg congregation, of which my father was a board member, and which had to overcome enormous difficulties, even protest from potential future neighbors of this institution, originally, planned to open at Kapellenstraße.

The school was formally closed in June 1942. By this time almost all students and all teachers had been put to death, with the exception of three or four *Mischlinge* -- who were left without education for the next three years, until the end of the War and of the Nazi regime, May 1945.

better education in languages, the classics, in science and literature than some of my Jewish friends, therefore I did not question my parents' decision to sacrifice some personal comfort (mine) for the sake of a better education. Ellen and I depended on one another's friendship and support and were determined to take advantage of the better learning environment offered at *Lyzeum Eins*, albeit at a price. We also paid RM 5.-- more per month in school fees than our Christian classmates did. Some of our classmates tried to be friendly and even played with us during recess, although many teachers energetically discouraged such 'unpatriotic behavior'.

On this day, November 10, 1938, several older students rushed into our classroom during recess between second and third period. This was quite unusual. At the time, the members of our own *Untertertia* class were barely teenagers, and the 'senior' members of the student body, attending *Unterprima* or *Oberprima* (12th or 13th grade) never acknowledged that we existed. They were 'young ladies'. By contrast, we were 'mere children.' This time, however, they had a special mission: they announced with considerable agitation that the Jewish synagogue on nearby *Michelsberg Platz* was burning. Everyone knew that Ellen Kahn and I were the last Jews remaining on the premises. All were curious, anxious to observe how we would react to this information. I don't know if their curiosity was satisfied. Ellen and I heard the words, but we could barely comprehend their meaning. This was just too absurd. We followed some of the more energetic classmates and the senior students to the upstairs windows from which we hoped to have a better view of the neighborhood. As we climbed the stairs, I struggled with this new information.

True, my family had been discussing the burning and looting of other

synagogues in Hesse for several days. Some months ago, there had been talk at the dinner table that the synagogue in München had been demolished by order of the government. But this was different. My synagogue was not in some far away place. It was right here, just a few minutes' walk from where I lived and from my school. This was my personal turf. It was as much a part of me as was my room at home, the school building where we stood. It was my spiritual home. If the world should ever be in danger, full of shadows or at war, the *Michelsberg* Synagogue would be a place of refuge. Fortress-like it overlooked the town from a strategic hilltop. Our synagogue was solid as a rock, richly ornamented in a pseudo-Byzantine style which was fashionable for synagogues designed in the mid-1800s. It was a source of pride for all Jews, whether they be devoutly orthodox, modern liberal, or reformed. Many non-Jewish Christian citizens routinely attended special events there.

picture

This was my family's place of worship. The building, and the people in it were supposed to teach, guide and protect me. I was proud of the impressive structure, of its enlightened leadership, of the many well known members, all of them respected fellow-citizens of the local German community -- doctors, dentists, artists, professors, scientists, owners of manufacturing concerns, bankers, retired political figures, writers, as well as many butchers, taylors, far less illustrious but no less respectable. I was proud that my father had been elected to be a member of the dedicated *Vorstand*, the secular governing body. Many of the leadership decisions were the subject of lively discussions between my parents and guests at our dinner table. Just recently, our beloved Rabbi Dr. Paul Lazarus had resigned his post for reasons of ill health. He suffered from diabetes and was going to move to Palestine with his wife and two young daughters. The girls were a year or two younger than I, and we were good friends. Parting was a sad and painful experience, but all of us were trying to learn how to deal with this experience

as many friends were leaving the country to start a new life outside of Germany. Only days earlier, Dr. Lazarus had been officially replaced by a handsome young rabbi from Munich, Dr. Bruno Finkelscherer, the son of the well known Rabbi Israel Finkelscherer from that city's large congregation[10] and brother of another rabbi, Herbert Finkelscherer, who was leading the Jewish community of Stettin at the time. All were graduates of the well respected rabbinical seminary in Breslau, Dr. Lazarus' *alma mater.*

picture

I could accept and understand that it might be necessary to replace a rabbi, but how would one replace the structure, should that become necessary, the mighty synagogue itself? Surely that would leave a gaping hole in the cityscape and in my own life. What's more, I was looking forward to turning fourteen in a few months and to celebrate my *Konfirmation* soon afterwards, in spring 1939. Then I would become an official member of the congregation. How would that important event be possible if the building were to burn now? If there were substantial structural damage, could that be repaired in time? Was I going to miss out on the party and the presents I would surely receive at that time? My brother had celebrated his Bar-Mitzvah[11] celebration in late March 1935, just a couple of years ago. It had been a big event in his life. In just a few more months it would be my turn.

All of us tried, two or three at a time, to peer from the window of an empty classroom across the rooftops in the direction of the *Michelsberg,* but there wasn't much to be seen. In the end, I took the other girls' word for it -

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[10] 10,000 members in 1940

[11] This ritual evolved over the centuries from a Jewish law dating to the 2nd century, indicating that a father was responsible for the deeds of his son through the age of 13. The term 'Bar Mitzvah' means honoring the covenant with God and is recorded first in the 15th century. Assimilated Jewish congregations in Germany called boys individually to read from the Thora scrolls shortly after their 13th birthday. Jewish girls were given similar access to learning and were called before the congregation as a group, not individually. This ceremony did not involve reading from the scroll, but included an affirmation of study and prayer.

- the large and imposing *Michelsberg* synagogue was on fire. Maybe that was smoke in the distance. Maybe it was just some cloud formation. How did the big girls know so much about what was going on? I could not really see anything, no matter how hard I tried. What had they been able to see?

picture

When our synagogue was built in the middle of the 19th century, it had been decided by the planners that it should form one corner of a distinctive triangle of important religious edifices: there was a Lutheran/protestant church at one corner, an Old Catholic church at another, and the synagogue at the third corner confirmed that we all believed in the same God. The planners and the architects had proven, or so I was told, that all is possible among men of good will. The configuration of these three houses of worship made a clear statement concerning the emancipated, enlightened belief in the equality of men, all of them being children of the same God. Little did I understand or comprehend then that this proud, symbolic gesture would turn out to be another Tower of Babel, that the entire civilized world around me would turn to dust and ashes, and that our magnificent synagogue would be but one of many early victims of 'man's inhumanity to men', as would art, culture, and much of Western thought and civilization, and millions of innocent people.

That mid-morning in mid-November, however, I was firmly convinced that the *Feuerwehr*, the local fire department, would take care of any possible problem. What I did not yet know was that the fire department was part of the problem. They were in place and busy, long before the synagogue had even begun to burn. They sprayed the neighboring houses all around the *Michelsberg Platz*, concerned that a stray spark might ignite one of the nearby apartment or office buildings. They also sprayed the building *Michelsberg* 28, across the street from the synagogue, where the

congregation had rented an apartment on the second floor for use as its administrative offices. This space was used for meetings and for social functions. Together with the Jewish youth group from nearby Mainz, we had celebrated an *Oneg Shabbat* festival on these premises just a few weeks ago, organized by the Wiesbaden Jewish youth group.

When the bell rang to announce the end of recess, we all resumed our places in the classroom. Much to our surprise, our homeroom teacher, *Herr Professor* Martin Rang, suddenly appeared at the door. He was not scheduled to teach here during that period. Standing in the door frame without entering the room, he motioned Ellen Kahn and me into the dark hallway. There he told us to go home. Right away. He took me aside and in the safe, dark shadows of the corridor he whispered that we should tell our parents that he and many well-meaning Germans were appalled at what was going on. I had no idea what he was talking about. But I nodded dutifully. We would relay his message. Then I returned to the classroom and, without answering any of the other students' questions or reacting to their surprised glances, I packed my books into the well-worn brown leather *Schulranzen* , my backpack, and hurried home, never to return.

I never saw Professor Rang again. After the War was over, however, he sent a messenger requesting that I sign a *Persilschein* , a document testifying to his anti-Nazi character. He needed this to prove that he had not been a Nazi, before the U.S. Military Government would clear him for continued teaching certification. I declined.

At home I found my mother, grandfather, and Senny Weißmüller, grandfather's housekeeper, sitting around our kitchen table. They paid no attention to me. They were not surprised by my early return from school.

They were deeply involved in some intensely serious conversation. All this was quite unusual. We never spent time sitting at the kitchen table. The kitchen was a place to work, to cook, not intended for visiting. In hushed voices they discussed some very upsetting events: Jewish owned stores and places of business were being vandalized all over town. Yes, the main a religious service.

We worried about my Dad and his safety. I wished fervently that he were at home so he could take charge. As a rule, Mother deferred to him in all matters. Consequently, I did not feel particularly secure with her heading up the little family council now. She politely listened to what my grandfather said, but he was usually outside the family management venue. As a practical contribution, Grandfather offered to meet Father's train at the nearby railway station and to alert him to the fact that some of the Jewish men in town had been arrested.

Just then my brother Paul arrived. His teacher had sent him home as well from the *Gutenberg Gymnasium* for boys.

picture

He and his friend Erich Fackenheim were the last remaining Jewish students at that institution. As of 1936, 94% of the *Gutenberg Gymnasium* student body were members of the Hitler Youth[12] . Typically, the study plans had long been adjusted: one week HJ *(Hitler Jugend)* tent camping experience was the accepted equivalent for six months study of Latin[13] .

picture

Mother and *Großvater* debated whether they should go downstairs and

[12] see *Erziehung im Nationalsozialismus* 1992, *Gutenbergschule.*

[13] Hans-Jürgen Meinderink and Annette Schorr, op.cit.

I helped Inge Naumann document seventeen Jewish former students who were listed in this school's archives between 1929 and 1938. No trace could be found for four of these boys, two were known to have been murdered in the concentration camps Mauthausen and Auschwitz, respectively. My brother Paul was one of these, his friend Leo Kahn was the other. Eleven Jewish students were able to leave Germany in time.

close the office for the day. It was lunch time. Two Christian office employes were on duty, Elfriede Heiliger, a recently hired apprentice, and *Frau* Mie Güllering, Dad's devoted, long time office manager. *Frau* Güllering had gone to her apartment at *Walramstraße* to eat lunch; Mother and *Großvater* were reluctant to make a decision in her absence. Normally, they were not involved with office management details. Elfriede was watching things, answering the telephone and eating a sandwich. Mother and *Großvater* hoped that nothing would happen to her, while counting on *Frau* Güllering to return soon and take any action that might be required. She was very reliable and would make the right decision.

Just a few weeks earlier, I had spent a pleasant Sunday afternoon with Elfriede in Sonnenberg, a nearby blue collar suburb, at her parents' modest home. She was only a couple of years older than I, fifteen or sixteen, and attending a trade school while working part time in my father's law office. That Sunday we spent much of our time eating juicy red-ripe raspberries fresh off the hedge at the end of her parents' garden. Her grandfather finally told us to stop. It wasn't clear whether he thought we were being too greedy or whether he feared we might end up with a stomach ache.

A little after noon, we heard a loud commotion outside. We rushed to the dining room window to peek outside from a place of perceived safety, hiding behind the heavy, ornate drapes over stiffly starched gauze curtains. Loud noise came from the direction of the *Weinhandlung* Simon, a Jewish wine wholesaler a few doors away on Bahnhofstraße. A rowdy mob was roaming about the street, gesticulating wildly. Most were men, but there were a few women here and there, screaming hysterically. The men were well prepared for the job at hand: they carried sticks, pipes, axes, and hammers. We were told later that, inside the wine dealership, the rioters swilled down premium

wine while passing bottles to the frustrated friends in the street outside who could not fit inside the building. They smashed the huge storage vats open and, supposedly, waded ankle deep in wine. The smell alone must have been intoxicating.

Finished with the Simon warehouse, the mob regrouped and headed for our property. As I learned later, Elfriede heard them coming and bolted out of the front door, terrified, screaming at the top of her lungs. I would never see her again. She never ventured anywhere near our house again. *Frau* Güllering later mailed her the last paycheck to her Sonnenberg home.

Mother, Paul, Senny and I did not have the option to escape into the street. In order to do that, we would have had to get past the raging mob. Impossible. We rushed upstairs, past grandfather's apartment, to a Christian tenant from Estonia who lived on the fourth floor. This lady had always greeted us politely when we met her in the staircase. Her husband was a German engineer who had worked for the German government in the Baltic region before moving to Wiesbaden. They had rented this flat just a few months earlier. We had no other contact with her or with the other Christian tenant, also an engineer, who had worked in Sweden on a similar assignment and who lived across the hall with his elegant Swedish wife. Now we hoped that this lady would not only be friendly but that she would prove helpful.

Mother rang the doorbell and we were silently motioned inside. There wasn't time for a lengthy discussion. The Estonian lady obviously knew what was going on and understood that we were in grave danger. She pointed to her bathroom, just to the right of the entrance door. The four of us perched on the edge of the bathtub, the commode, leaned against the sink, and we

listened intently for the noise from downstairs. Soon someone banged on the apartment door. Raucous, drunken voices demanded to know where the Jews Guthmann were. We could hear the exchange clearly. The Estonian tenant made them repeat their question, pretending not to understand what they were saying in the dialect of this region, while she thought the situation over. Mercifully, she did not give us away. The men uttered some profanity, then stumbled down the stairs again with their sledgehammers and pickaxes, cursing loudly. A few minutes after this exchange, our protectress opened the bathroom door and told us that we must leave. In broken German, she explained that she feared her husband would not approve of her giving us shelter.

We did not dare venture downstairs. For a long time we hid in a little storage unit next to the two fourth floor apartments. There were two small pantries, one for *Großvater,* one for us. Since we did not have the keys with us, we huddled in the tiny unlit entrance, a space measuring about two meters square, behind an unlocked door which led to the open stairwell and landing. There was barely room to stand for the four of us, little air to breathe. We listened intently, did not dare whisper a word. I was fearful that the men with their axes and hammers might return, search further and find us here.

We heard the crash of breaking glass, the crack of splintering wood as the mob plundered our apartment and Father's office. Our furniture and personal belongings went sailing through the windows into the street. We waited for a very long time until the last yell, the last crash, the final drunken obscenity shouts had died down before we dared making our way downstairs.

Then we tiptoed past *Großvater's* apartment on the third floor. It was totally undisturbed as was the one next to it, occupied by a Jewish tenant, *Herr* Hermann Köster[14] and his housekeeper Frau Hedwig Mamsohn[15]. On the second floor, however, the once ornate entrance door to our flat was smashed to smithereens. Inside, our beautiful apartment had disappeared. In its place were piles of broken glass, leading to broken furniture, ripped clothes, shredded and torn books. Total devastation.

A few days earlier, Mother had filled several glass jars with sliced red beets, pickled for use during the upcoming wintermonths. I last saw them lined up on the kitchen shelf, the sliced vegetable peacefully marinating in vinegar and spices, laurel leaves and peppercorns. Now all the jars were gone. They had been thrown against the walls, pictures, the ceilings, into rows of books, poured over furniture and bedding. A valuable Gobelin tapestry wall hanging in the dining room was crisscrossed with cuts from a sharp knife, possibly a *Blut und Ehre* (blood and honor) dagger, standard equipment with every Nazi uniform. Every window and light fixture, every bit of glass in the apartment was shattered. Books lay everywhere, their open pages smeared with beet juice, many pages ripped out. I had always been cautioned to open books carefully, never to place them face down, lest their spines suffer. This was not a concern now.

Our feather beds were slashed, goose down feathers fluttered all about in the chill November breeze. A large print of Rembrandt's 'Man with the Golden Helmet' in the *Herrenzimmer* living room was torn and splashed with red beet juice. Broken glass, bits and pieces of the ornate frame lay everywhere. The big brown leather sofa and its two matching club chairs were slashed across the seat and the back from side to side, spilling

[14] Deported to Theresienstadt on 9-1-42 and killed.

[15] Deported 'East' to Piaski on 5-24-42 and killed.

stuffing, oozing pungent blood-red liquid.

The telephones had been ripped from the wall. Mother's treasured upright piano was just a pile of splintered wood, broken bits of ivory and twisted wires. The ornate inlaid hardwood floor with its unique 'Persian rug' pattern, artfully created from different hue wood pieces in the living room, dining room, and hallway had always been lovingly waxed and polished. Mother would show it off with pride. Now it was deliberately scratched and gouged in every room. Cupboards and book cases had been smashed, their contents thrown out of vacant windows. Our clothes had been yanked from the closets and tossed outside, some of them hanging in the lilac trees in back, others dangling from the three majestic evergreen in the front.

My beloved dolls and teddy bears lay violated and helpless on the floor of my little bedroom, heads, legs and arms ripped off. Shelves were torn from the wall. The closet door hung at a bizarre angle by a single hinge. My winter coat was split down the back, my underwear shredded. Mother had always been a packrat: when we moved into this house, she stuffed two armoires into my room, filled them with party dresses from her own *Pensionat* (finishing school) years. Presumably, these were intended to be altered for my use a few years hence, a job Kättel Hirsch would have gladly performed some time in the near future. The chests and their contents lay amid the debris in the back yard, scattered on the grassy ground, mixed with books, toys, games and puzzles. Dismembered teddy bears, legless dolls and my brother's collection of tin soldiers were strewn about everywhere, fallen soldiers on a deserted battlefield.

My little wash-up sink in the corner was smashed, water slowly dripping from the pipes. Next door, the large Italian marble double sink of the main

bathroom was also smashed, water working its way through the tile floor, leaking through the ceiling into the office below.

In the hallway, just outside the dining room door and across from my room, Mother's brightly polished silver tray normally displayed her prized baroque tea and coffee service, resting on a heavy antique oak chest. The entire set was gone - coffee pot, tea pot, creamer, sugar bowl, and tray.[16] Every piece of furniture in the entrance hall was smashed. None of the kitchen appliances, plumbing, table or chairs had survived. The large oak buffet in the dining room with its imitation Renaissance carving was overturned on the slashed and beet stained oriental carpet. Row upon row of crystal goblets had disappeared. The traditional *Treveris*-tulip pattern stemware for Mosel wine, large clear bowls for red wine, sturdy *Römer* for Rhine wine, slim flutes for champagne, small aperitif, liqueur, and dessert wine glasses, not a single one was left.

The linen storage closets were empty. After every week's washing and ironing session, it had been my job to tie the different sets of damask napkins with brightly colored satin ribbons. I used to proudly sort them by pattern, dreaming of the time when I would have my own well appointed household.

Several of our Venetian lace *Klapperdeckchen* were impaled on shards of broken glass in the empty window frames. These little doilies were essential when setting the table with bone china plates, because we always provided a serving plate for the food and allowed another, strictly decorative plate underneath. Every set of 'twelve' plates actually consisted of 'twenty-four' plates. The *Klapperdeckchen* job was to prevent noise, so the plates

[16] All this would have been taken from us soon afterwards, anyway, in the course of the official confiscation of jewelry, silverware and valuables from Jews. But the particular participant in this rampage at our house considered himself to be a higher priority in this portion of the acquisition of Jewish property.

would not *klapper* as they were changed out for clean ones after each course. There were no plates left anywhere, none to *klapper,* none to change. I had dusted the heavy oak dinner table a few days earlier, cursing the tricky carved legs. Now it was toppled on its side like a dead animal after an exhausting hunt, two legs missing.

The apartment reeked from acid beet juice. The familiar, comforting smell of fresh flowers, cooking odors, hints of tobacco, the tang of leather furniture -- all had disappeared, displaced by the stench of vinegar, the smell of sweat, and the alcohol-breath of drunken men. We now inhabited a public toilet.

Father's office on the first floor was buried under a sea of paper, torn files, ripped books, overturned, broken furniture. Everything drenched with water which dripped steadily from the ceiling as if the building were in tears. Smashed furniture, torn files and ripped law books lay in the street and in the yard. Telephones were torn out of the wall sockets, the switchboard ruined beyond repair.

Ever since the National Socialist Party had come to power, there had been a rash of politically rather than personally motivated divorces of expedience, a steady break-up of mixed marriages. Christian husbands left their Jewish wives and Christian wives left their Jewish husbands as the racial theories and restrictive laws were implemented. Partners felt unable or were unwilling to keep their vows under these cicumstances[17]. Many of these separations were conducted in an ugly, even vengeful manner. Well

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[17] There were some laudable exceptions to this trend. See the fate of Julius and Elisabeth Hallheimer in the appendix.
My own 'privileged mixed marriage' parents-in-law, Wilhelm and Cornelia Opfermann nee Groß, remained together until they both committed suicide in their respective Gestapo jail cells in February 1945, just weeks before the end of the War and of the end of the Nazi reign of terror.

before the institution[18] of special Jewish lawyers for Jewish clients, many of the Jewish partners involved in such a break-up came to my father's office for counsel, for legal advice, for personal, emotional, and general guidance, even when he was not their principal divorce attorney. More than most other divorce cases, these proceedings and negotiations went into very private areas of concern. Consequently, my father had set up a special cabinet where these files were kept under lock and key, inaccessible even to the regular office staff. Now, however, these papers were strewn all about the neighborhood. The most private affairs of these and other clients were scattered about the street, the garden, for several city blocks in every direction all around our house. Strangers rummaged through them, eagerly reading as they sifted through the debris.

One of my favorite after office hours games, alone or with friends, had been hide-and-go-seek under the office desks. Those knee hole spaces could be transformed into my own private domain in the blink of an eye. I could be a princess on an enchanted island, or an explorer at a remote outpost near the frozen Northpole. The desks were gone. So were all dreams. No place to hide, nothing to seek. There would be no more flights of phantasy for me in the future. Every typewriter had received a well directed blow from a sledgehammer. All were cast about the backyard, the carriages protruding at odd angles. Someone had walked off with the safe. In the space of an hour, our middle class, relatively secure life had ended.

An oversized, poignant World War One photograph once dominated the wall behind my father's desk. It showed his World War One airplane from the (then) fledgling German *Luftwaffe*, shot down over Normandy, half hanging in the trees. The rest of the plane was in tatters, as was the entire office now.

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[18] November 1, 1938

Some time ago, Father had pointedly placed this picture on the wall for every visitor to note its detail, and he was always ready to explain the circumstances at the slightest sign of interest. The picture showed him in full uniform, a German soldier, defender of his fatherland, proudly wearing his many decorations. He stood alone in front of the ruined aircraft. His bandaged head was encased in a bird-cage-like contraption. His head and face were completely covered with plastercast and bandages, leaving only two small slits for the eyes and one each for his mouth and nose. How he could see, breathe, talk and eat with this mummy-like covering had always been a puzzle. He told me that for a long time he used to drink his nourishment, soups and milk concoctions only, with the help of a 'straw' which, in those days, was a real straw from the fields, not the plastic tubes we use now. Over all of this, he wore the protective 'birdcage'.

This was long before aviation medicine had become a special field of study within the profession. The scene never failed to elicit comments and questions: What happened to the pilot? and the co-pilot? the gunner? the photographer? All were killed. Dad had been the observer/reconnaissance specialist *(Beobachter)*. He alone escaped, although he was hurt badly: He suffered multiple broken bones and he had to wear the strange wire cage over his head during the lengthy recovery process. His nose was broken in two places, both his upper and lower jaws were broken in two places each. He had also suffered several skull fractures. The 'birdcage' post-battle armor was his steady companion and protector for a long time, making him look like some creature out of a futuristic science-fiction thriller. But he did heal eventually and immediately went back to the front. According to *Oma*, my maternal grandmother, he was even more handsome after the many wounds from the crash had healed than he had ever been before.

Ever since I was a little girl, I was fascinated by this picture and this strange scene from that terrible war. In 1933 the National Socialist government forbade Jewish citizens to display the black-white-and-red or the black-red-and-gold German flag (flying the red-white-and-black Nazi Swastika flag was out of the question). Jewish veterans of World War One were not permitted to wear their wartime military decorations. In protest, Dad arranged to have this snapshot enlarged and gave it the most prominent place in his office. "As of that day," he said "I knew that I was no longer a German patriot or a war hero. I was a Jew."

But he was not a victim -- not yet.

picture

(The picture of my Dad and of the downed plane which I am showing here is a re-creation, using the photograph of a comerade's downed plane, combined with a wartime snapshot of my Dad and his brother Eduard during homeleave from the battle front. The original picture was ruined during the vandalism of *Kristallnacht* on 11-10-38.)

The message of this picture was never lost on his clients and on visitors to the office. It was not lost on the vandals who smashed the place and all that we owned and that they could lay their hands on that day. Another wall displayed a set of Honore Daumier[19] etchings from this artist's 'Men of Law' series -- caricatures of lawyers in full court regalia, robed, wigged, at their pompous best.

picture

Each of these sported an appropriate, amusing caption. One sticks in my memory to this day - it cautioned

'Quand les parties sont d'accord, les avocats sont des anes'

(When the (sparring) parties reach an agreement (on their own), the lawyers are the fools)

It proved to be prophetic

The office decor told a lot about my Dad: He was knowledgeable and resourceful, judging by the rows upon rows of books and reference works. He had a sense of humor and was not above self-mockery. He was proud and

19 1808-1879.

also hurt, but not about to suffer abuse in silence. He was not made of the stuff that victims are made of, and a long list of courageous battles fought -- as a brave soldier and as a dare-devil member of the country's fledgling *Luftwaffe* during the 1914-1918 War, as a lawyer in and out of court, and as a politically active, concerned German citizen during the tumultuous Weimar Republic years -- all gave eloquent testimony to this fact. While the pictures, books and other wall adornements did not receive the pickled red beet juice treatment endured by the contents of the apartment upstairs, the diplomas, documents and pictures in the office were hacked to bits. The picture of the World War One plane with its subtle message was smashed into a thousand bits and splinters. It had been noticed, its message was understood, and the challenge did not remain unanswered. I still shudder at the thought of what might have happened had these cruel men found us in our hideout upstairs.

In the early afternoon, Grandfather returned with my father. I wanted to run up and hug them, ask Dad to sit down with me and explain that day's many terrible events. But the adults were just too busy. It seemed that they were, themselves, quite unable to understand what was happening, trying to learn more details. They also struggled hard to determine what all this meant in terms of our personal future, short term and long range. Still, I was happy to see him home. Everything seemed easier to accept as long as our family was together and unhurt. For now.

As we walked about the debris together, Dad reported that the severely handicapped brother-in-law, Berthold Hirsch in Dienheim, had been arrested and beaten. He'd been made to walk from Dienheim to the police detention center in Oppenheim, many miles away. Berthold had lost a leg during his World War One military service. He always walked slowly and with

great effort, aided by a cane, painfully swinging his artificial leg forward from the hip with each step. I could not picture him walking this great distance, since he had such difficulties just getting around in the small living room and kitchen of his modest little house. Dad did not yet know that the Hirsch home was vandalized shortly after he had left, just like our apartment and his office, and that Kättel, Berthold's Christian wife, was raped in the process by one of the vandals.

Frowning and clearly troubled, Dad walked through the wreckage from one end of the apartment upstairs to the farthest corner of his office downstairs, trying to assess the damage done to us during this rampage. He tried to estimate what could be salvaged and how best to go about it. He assured Mother that we would be able to recover the worst, because we carried insurance. (Little did he know that the German government had other plans and was not about to let us off the hook so easily: The insurance payments were collected by the German government, not by the insured Jewish policy holders.)

Then someone mentioned that several of our Jewish friends had gone into hiding. A lengthy debate ensued whether Dad should do likewise. I was not part of this conversation and wandered about, sometimes trying to listen in. Mostly, I tried to figure out by myself what was going on, tried to imagine how life would continue. The family finally decided that hiding was not an option for Dad. He was too well known. He would be found out. And, he said, he wasn't about to crawl into a hole. He was too proud and too angry. He did, however, sit down and wrote a power-of-attorney for my mother, so that she could attend to the business of the clean-up and of running our family's affairs during his anticipated absence.

No one paid much attention to me. I was left to wander about the debris. Now and then I picked up a book or a toy. I caught myself wanting to wake up from this nastry dream, but whenever I held my mutilated dolls and battered teddy bears in my arms, I realized that 'this could be me'. I asked myself: would I ever go to school again? would there be books in my life again? dolls? toys? friends? a bed to sleep in? a chair on which to sit? It certainly did not look like this would be possible again.

Grandfather suggested that I move into his apartment upstairs, until such time when our own apartment would be habitable again. He suggested that I could sleep in my late grandmother's unused bed and take my meals with him and the housekeeper, Senny. Mother and Paul were to join us at mealtime also. That seemed to be a splendid idea. I could still try to be helpful with the clean-up downstairs, but I'd have a place to get away from it all afterwards. There would be a bathroom I could use, a bed in which to sleep, tables and chairs. I was delighted when mother accepted this invitation on my behalf.

Normally, one of the special treats whenever I took my breakfast with Grandfather were the crisp fresh hard rolls which a little bakery delivery boy brought very early every morning. Little boys, often as young as six or seven years of age, ran such errands before going to school. In this way they helped to earn money for their families. Our nearest bakery was just a few doors down the street, and these fresh rolls were often still warm, just out of the oven, when the little paper sack with six or eight rolls was deposited at the apartment door. Helas, no one had counted on the political convictions of little boys or predicted the weight this would now carry. Just a few days after *Kristallnacht*, I think it was on November 12th, there were no rolls at the door in the morning, nor were there any the following day.

Grandfather went to the bakery in the afternoon and inquired. He had pre-paid for this service for the entire month and felt the baker still owed him two weeks worth of fresh rolls. He was informed that there would be no more fresh rolls for Jews. The little boy refused to make deliveries to a Jewish customer, and his employers saw nothing wrong with such a business decision. *Großvater* shrugged it off. He could do without fresh rolls for breakfast. Compared to the other experiences, fresh rolls were not a big deal. In retrospect, this rather insignificant incident appears symptomatic of those years in Nazi Germany: a little boy of six or seven decides whether his employer's Jewish customer merits service.

Likewise, the barber across the street had just recently sold Grandfather a subscription coupon book for a month's worth of daily barbering. On the morning of November 11th, the door to this barbershop sported the official brown and beige sign *Juden unerwünscht* (Jews not wanted here)[20]. By then Grandfather understood that his new subscription book was null and void, and he took care of his daily shave at home. He was hurt, but he could do nothing about this or any of the other cumulative insults. All these things were reasonably 'inoffensive', compared to the day in October 1935 when the mayor of his hometown Eich, Herr W., together with a dozen or so of the mayor's local SA companions, had beaten *Großvater* to a bloody pulp in order to make him give up his home, give away his business and leave town.

Still planning ahead on that early afternoon of November 10th, even for the near term, Dad searched for some clothes to pack for the anticipated arrest by the Gestapo. My parents' best friend and one of Dad's

[20] These signs had to be individually purchased by the business owner. They did not suddenly appear uninvited as is now often claimed. The barber must have had the sign on hand, ready to paste it on the door, the day when he sold the coupon book.

favorite clients was Julius Hallheimer[21]. Until it was 'aryanized' in mid-November 1938[22], this friend owned a small knitting mill on *Marktplatz,* right across from my school yard. That enterprising firm had recently designed and just started production of an unusual and innovative line of warm shirts for men in sizes small, medium and large for winter wear. These shirts were cut and styled just like a regular man's cotton shirt, except they were made of finely spun wool. There was even a choice of cuffs, button-down or with button holes to display one's favorite cufflinks. *Herr* Hallheimer had recently made Dad a present of one of these shirts in -- practical -- navy blue. Dad managed to find this shirt in the debris and placed it into his briefcase.

Just then, two burly civilians arrived at the landing where our entrance door used to be. No need to ring the doorbell. It did not function, anyway. They walked into what had been the entrance hall, the *Diele,* and identified themselves as Gestapo officials[23]. They announced that they had come to place Dad under arrest, to take him into protective custody. He was to go with them to the nearby *Polizeigefängnis,* the police prison. That is where accused criminals spent the pre-sentencing time during the investigative pre-trial portion of their court case. The men asked Paul's age and Grandfather's, and decided after brief consultation among themselves that both were exempt from the protective custody provision for reasons of age. Paul was too young, and Grandfather was too old. This rule was applied arbitrarily: my elderly maternal grandfather in Gießen was arrested and spent several months in Buchenwald, and some of Paul's teenage

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21 See appendix

22 Actually, it was stolen by one of his employes, see HHStA Wiesbaden Hallheimer-Vollbrandt archive files. This was very often the standard scenario.

23 As it turned out, this was a blatant lie, a misrepresentation. I later got to know most of the members of the Paulinenstraße 9 Gestapo complex and never saw these men again. They were 'regular' NS party members, gladly doing such arrest-the-Jews duty as part of their patriotic party functions.

friends were also arrested and detained in concentration camps for months. My maternal grandfather eventually died from the consequences of his imprisonment in Buchenwald.

The wool shirt was to serve Dad well during his incarceration, during long hours of *Appell* (standing at attention) on the windblown top of the Ettersberg mountain in the coming weeks.

picture

When he was released in early December, he left the shirt behind with his less fortunate fellow inmates in order to keep them warm.

Dad took his small briefcase under his arm, slipped on the lightweight coat he had worn for the morning's trip to Oppenheim, took his wide brimmed, grey *Borsalino* hat and bade us all farewell. He did not flinch. Holding his head high, he walked a few steps ahead of the short, potbellied Gestapo agents. I watched from the empty window frame of the master bedroom of our apartment as he briskly turned left at our garden gate, haughtily ignoring the gawkers and pilferers. He lead the way for the little party of three to the *Polizeigefängnis* on *Schillerplatz*. Many of his friends and clients were already incarcerated there and glad to see him join the group. They knew he would comfort and guide them during the difficult times ahead. Watching the 'Gestapo' men and Dad leave, it struck me as odd, yet again, that so many of the Jewish supposedly 'subhuman *Untermenschen*' that I knew <u>looked</u> every inch like the much touted ideal Aryan supermen, especially when placed alongside fervent, committed Nazi functionaries. His rotund captors struggled mightily to keep pace with him.

Late that afternoon, Ulla, my longtime close friend and classmate, came to visit. She bravely wiggled through the thick throng of thrill seekers

and thieves who crowded around our house, busily picking through our belongings on the street and in the once carefully manicured *Vorgarten* in front. She brought me the day's assigned homework. And she thoughtfully provided paper and pencils, because she had heard about the destruction and devastated condition of our home. Perhaps it was totally out of place for me to busy myself with homework at this time and in this place, but it was strangely comforting to have this hold-over from my former 'normal' life. For several days she returned on this mission of mercy, always bringing me homework, providing her own textbooks, since mine were nowhere to be found. Ulla reported at length what all had been taught in class on any given day, even trying to cheer me up with some of the funny things that had happened that day and that had made her and my former firneds and classmates laugh. This kept a connectedness alive which was truly helpful as I tried to deal with the new realities and my own new identity as an outcast. As long as Ulla came to visit, I was not yet completely cut off. About a week later, however, Ulla's mother instructed her to keep her distance from me and stay away from our Jew house and its problems. We both wept bitter tears as we took leave from one another. We were not to meet again until the Summer of 1945, by which time much had changed. By that time, it wasn't only our home and our synagogue, but much of Germany that lay in ruins.

A few weeks earlier, in mid-October, there had been an ugly'little girls' catfight' in our school yard during recess: Lore T., the lone classmate who was then a member of the BDM *(Bund deutscher Mädchen)* Hitler youth group and, incidentally, by far academically the poorest performing student among the 20-odd pupils in the class,

picture

Lore T. here pointedly turning her back on Gerty Rosenau, a Jewish classmate who was later able to escape the Holocaust killing when she was selected to

had picked a nasty fight with one of the three American classmates. Several children of General Motors executives attended German schools in the area with varying success. The object of Lore's attack was Charlotte, the daughter of Peter Hoglund, at the time the American chief executive of the Rüsselsheim Opel manufacturing plant. General Motors of Detroit had purchased this automobile manufacturing firm from *Geheimrat* von Opel just a few years earlier. Hoglund had recently arrived from another General Motors assignment in Sweden to take on the management of this large firm. He served in the top managerial position for this German operation, representing the interest of the General Motors corporate home office in Detroit. Charlotte spoke and understood very little German and, consequently, was not a good student. But she was a lot of fun to be with, enormously popular among the classmates, and well liked by all teachers. There was something very naturally charming and glamorous about her, more so than about the other American students. Her attractive and well assorted wardrobe, her personal conduct and attitude were very different from that of the rest of the rather docile, dowdy German student body. By that time, late 1938, Martha V., another American student, had been a member of our class for a couple of years. In contrast to Charlotte, Martha spoke German quite well, tried to be as much like the German fellow students as possible. She even wore the then popular *völkisch Dirndl* dresses just like the rest of us did.

The families of the Opel/General Motors American executives lived in elegant villas in the best parts of town[24] . The husbands and fathers worked

[24] by the strangest of coincidences, the elegant villa which the Hoglund family rented at that time was the former servants' wing of my later cousins- in-law Karl and Medi Henkell, Rosselstraße 18

at the Opel plant[25] in nearby Rüsselsheim, one of the most important suppliers of *Luftwaffe* equipment throughout World War Two.

During their fight, Lore pulled Charlotte's hair, inflicted some nasty facial scratches, and shouted several derogatory comments about the 'American Jew president Franklin D. *Rosenfeld* '. Her deliberate mispronouncing the name of President Franklin Delanoe Roosevelt was a typical, frequent National Socialist distortion, popular during this anti-American pre-War phase. This name-change distortion referred to the frequently claimed statement by German historians that the American president was of despicable Jewish origin and had changed his name to the less obviously 'Jewish' version in order to hide his family roots.

Charlotte felt obliged to defend her nation's and her president's honor retaliated by making some uncomplimentary remarks about the German *Führer* Adolf Hitler . As a rule, Charlotte was discreet and would have never indulged in such an imprudent attack had she not been provoked. But she felt it was called for to defend her President Roosevelt from this schoolyard bully. This exchange was promptly and dutifully brought to the attention of *Herr Direktor* Dr. Heinecke, the principal, and he suspended Charlotte immediately. Henceforth, she would not be permitted to attend school anywhere in Germany.

A few days later, getting bored with just staying at home, with nothing to do but play with her *Schnauzer* dog Buddy and --then-- two years old baby

[25] The Opel plant later employed many foreign forced labor conscripts who were imprisoned in the *Opellager* (camp for slave laborers) in nearby Bischofsheim. Many of these imprisoned workers lost their lives because they were not permitted to use available air raid shelters during air attacks by Allied bombers during the War. The slave laborers formed small resistance clusters.
A local resident, one Walter Rietig, supported and befriended them in spite of strict legislation prohibiting such contacts. He was accused of *Wehrkraftzersetzung* (destruction of the ability to defend the Fatherland) and was executed in December 1942 at Plötzensee. (see*Gedenkstätten für die Opfer des Nationalsozialismus, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung,* vol.1, 1995, p.351).

brother Peter[26], Charlotte 'casually' strolled past the schoolyard fence at a time when she knew all her friends and former classmates would be outside, playing tag or cops and robbers or some other fun game during recess, as usual. I happened to be near the gate just then with a small cluster of classmates. We noticed Charlotte immediately and chatted excitedly through the fence, bringing her up-to-date on all the latest classroom gossip. Then I brazenly pulled her into the school yard (a defiant act and an infraction of school rules) and carried her in triumph on my shoulders all about the playground while Charlotte screamed in embarrassed/delighted protest "*Laß mich runter!*" (Let me down!)

Like Charlotte just a few weeks earlier, I now grew bored at home. I sorely missed the routine of our daily school activities, hated the depressing drudgery of cleaning up the horrible mess and, on a whim I telephoned Charlotte. Our telephone service had just been reinstated and, in Dad's absence, the office did not require the exclusive use of our telephone line. I informed her that I had been dismissed from school as well, albeit for different reasons. She knew all about the *Kristallnacht* event, because the Hoglund family listened to 'foreign' radio broadcasts, something which was strictly *verboten* for German citizens. She invited me to come to her home and play with her. I had never visited her home before, had always admired Charlotte's self-assured ways and, with all the talk among our family and Jewish friends of people planning to emigrate to America or other exotic places, I was intrigued by such a chance to experience an American household right next door, in my home town, without ever having to cross the Atlantic Ocean. I even indulged in some hopeful daydreaming: I fancied that Charlotte's father might find a job for my Dad, for my brother or for my grandfathers (or for all four) in one of the stateside factories of the large General Motors organization and that this might make our immigration to

[26] who was to succeed into the managerial position at Opel Rüsselsheim in the 1950s

America possible. I had visions of myself as the savior of our family in these troubled times. Additionlly, Charlotte and I both had been wronged by the school's decision to put us out, and I was grateful to have a friend in whom I could confide some of my feelings, my anger, and my fears.

class picture w/Charlotte

That afternoon, Charlotte showed me the 'Life' magazine copy with pictures of the *Kristallnacht* devastation in Germany. Better than I, she knew all about the vandalism in other parts of Germany. Strangely enough, this interesting copy with the detailed report and pictures of destroyed property and looted stores was not furtively hidden as it might have been in a German household. It was openly on display, on the coffee table in the middle of the Hoglund living room, in full view for any visitor or spying neighbor to see and report to the Nazi authorities. This alone was puzzling, because it was forbidden to listen to foreign radio reports; surely such a brazen display was in violation of some rule or law. She introduced me to the delights of ice cold Coca Cola from the well stocked family refrigerator and to her mother's delicious, home made chocolate covered orange rinds. She announced proudly "My mother is a good cook," as we both munched on fists full of chocolate covered orange rinds. Such praise was somehow strange and alien to my ears, as strange as were the delicacies I was allowed to sample by mouth. We did not brag about our mothers in a German setting. It was just one of many new perspectives I was to learn from this friend.

Soon I began to relax and assumed that my life might go on in some manner, after all. On the following day, however, Charlotte's mother returned home early from a shopping expedition in town. We were playing with marbles *(Klicker)* in front of the garage as she drove up. Like a well behaved German child, I curtsied politely then stepped aside to let her drive past. Mrs. Hoglund got out of her car and picked up her packages from the

back seat of her new Opel. She did not acknowledge my presence but walked past me, heading straight for the front door. As she juggled the packages, pushing the key into the door, she shouted some angry words at Charlotte. I did not understand the English words, but the message was loud and clear: I was to be sent home immediately. I was not welcome here. Such treatment was all too familiar to me. I had almost gotten used to it over the last five years, since 1933. But it surprised me in this American setting.

I was embarrassed, hurt, and confused. I had done nothing wrong that I could think of. When my classmate Ulla had turned her back on me a few days earlier after many years of close friendship, I could understand and accept that development; she was part of the German environment, people who had declared themselves to be our mortal enemies. Many other German playmates had done the same thing for several years. I had learned to accept it, even though it hurt terribly every time. I could never get used to it. Each time hurt as much as it had the very first time. Silly me, I had assumed that this prominent American family would be supportive and might understand how I felt. I had even allowed myself to dream that this relationship/friendship might form a link to a future life in a new, free country for me and for my family. I was mistaken.

Meanwhile, the cleanup at our home continued. I remember Mother's tears, the first I had ever seen. I was frightened and embarrassed. Grownups didn't cry, or so I thought. Wasn't that something shameful that one outgrew (like bedwetting) in time and with a little effort? But she did not give in to her pain. We started to move everything that was beyond repair into the trash bins downstairs. As we gathered up the piles destined for the trash, the extent of the damage was driven home.

The *Michelsberg* synagogue congregation's former rabbi, Dr. Paul Lazarus, was just then leaving for his and his family's new life in Palestine. Before leaving town, he sent us his family's complete dining room set -- table, chairs and a large oak bookcase full of books from his own comprehensive personal collection, to replace some of the things we had lost. Many years later[27] the main body of the valuable Lazarus book collection was to return to Wiesbaden, generously donated by his heirs for use by the students at the Wiesbaden *Volkshochschule*. By that time the many books he had given to my family had long been scooped up by neighbors at pennies a piece, after our deportation to the death camps in November 1942.

But our troubles continued apace. Rumors circulated throughout town, brought to our attention by well-meaning friends, that a 'large cache of weapons' had been found in our apartment. We owned no firearms or weapons of any sort and were puzzled and frightened by this accusation and its implications. It was illegal to own weapons. What would happen to us now if the police were to follow up on this rumor? What if someone were to furtively plant weapons in all this debris? That would be easy to do. Finally, Mother concluded that the talk might have been prompted by a small display of my father's old fencing foils from long-ago student years, and a lone ceremonial sword from his brief World War One service with a German cavalry unit. My brother Paul had recently mounted these tipped foils and the sabre on the wall over his bed, framing Dad's old wire fencing mask from Dad's years as a member of the German Jewish students' duelling fraternities.

picture

It was Paul's attempt to provide some macho decor for his room. Undoubtedly, he was trying to define his emerging role as a young man. Mother managed to find these 'weapons' and, over Paul's tearful protest,

[27] in January 1999

she and I carried them to the nearby police station. There we turned them over to the grinning sergeant on duty. If Paul had ever enjoyed any adolescent phantasies of bravely fighting evil, defending his and our honor, or of being a future member of the "KC", the Jewish students' fraternities[28], it all came to a sad and sudden end during those post-*Kristallnacht* days and weeks.

picture

Soon the trash barrels were overflowing, and we had not even made a dent in our flat or done anything of consequence to clean up Father's office. We were forced to leave the front yard and the street in front of the house untouched, because we did not dare risk nasty confrontations with the crowd of gawkers and thieves who had firmly established themselves there. They considered the piles of trash rightfully theirs and were busily picking their way through it all at any hour of the day or night. They even argued noisily with one another about who had found what first. For weeks these people crowded shamelessly around our place.

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28 The *Kartell Convent deutscher Studenten jüdischen Glaubens;* see also Victor Klemperer LTI, Reclam *Verlag* Leipzig, 1975, p. 177-- and also Arnhold Bauer, *Aufbau,* 1946, H.2:"*..blutmäßiger Anti-Semitismus .. in Deutschland nicht vorhanden...* "; "*..Die Burschenschcaften ... lehnten bei der Gründung der Allgemeinen deutschen Burschenschaften die Taufbedingung ab...*" "bloodrelated antisemitism...not present in Germany..."; "...the fraternities..declined the baptism requirement when they founded the General german fraternities..."

In the editorial section of the 1931 edition of the *"Jüdische Adressbuch für Gross-Berlin" Goedega Verlags-Gesellschaft m.b.H.* in Berlin, p.90, reprinted 1994, Arani *Verlag,* the *Kartell-Convent der Verbindungen deutscher Studenten Jüdischen Glaubens* is desrcibed:
"Die Verbindungen im K.C. stehen auf dem Boden deutsch-vaterländischer Gesinnung. Sie haben zum Zweck den Kampf gegen den Antisemitismus in der deutschen Studentenschaft und die Erziehung ihrer Mitglieder zu selbstbewussten Juden, die im Bewusstsein, daß die deutschen Juden einen durch Geschichte, Kultur- und Rechtsgemeinschaft mit dem deutschen Vaterland unlöslich verbundenen Volksteil bilden, jederzeit bereit und imstande sind, für die politische und gesellschaftliche Gleichberechtigung der deutschen Juden einzutreten. -Der K.C. lehnt die Bestrebungen zur Lösung der deutschen Judenfrage außerhalb Deutschlands ab. -Zu politischen und religiösen Sonderbestrebungen innerhalb des Judentums nehmen die Verbindungen im K.C. keine Stellung, soweit dies nicht durch Absatz 1 und 2 bedingt ist. ..."

In desperation, Mother struck a deal with a little man of our acquaintance who had been doing odd transporting jobs for friends. He owned an old horse and a small wagon. For several weeks I watched sadly as he and his swaybacked mare hauled our former life to the city dump.

In the midst of all this work, Mother tried desperately to ascertain my father's and *Opa's* (her father's) whereabouts. We had not received a word from them, nor had any of the other Jewish families in town heard from or about their loved ones. In desperation, many of the women turned to soothsayers, tea-leaf-readers, fortune tellers and palm readers. Perfectly sane, logical, intelligent, and well-educated women placed themselves at the mercy of these quacks. Any port in the storm. There was no support structure left: Our former rabbi had left town, our new rabbi was imprisoned. People were desperately searching for a comforting word, regardless of the source. Some brave souls ventured to inquire at the forbidding Gestapo compound at Paulinenstraße 9.

picture

Irmgard Levy, a pretty twenty-years-old member of our sports group *Schild*, managed to pry some information out of one of the Gestapo agents. He told her "... your father is in Buchenwald...". Like wildfire, this information spread, was weighed, interpreted, evaluated, and analyzed by the many desperate women in the *Jüdische Frauenverein e.V.*, the unofficial local women's organisation. Mother and her friend Elisabeth Hallheimer[29] tried to 'interpret' the information by giving it a local spin:

The two ladies travelled to *Schloß* Hohenbuchau in Georgenborn, not far from

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29 *Frau* Hallheimer was the Christian wife of Julius Hallheimer, my parents' closest friend. Although *Herr* Hallheimer was arrested at 3 AM on 11-10-38, he was released later that day and not transported to a concentration camp because of his severe World War One injury and his status as a 'totally disabled World War One veteran' with a Christian wife.

Wiesbaden, in *Frau* Hallheimer's 1936 Opel[30]. '*Schloß* Hohenbuchau' was an ominous 19th century castle which sat in a huge park near Schlangenbad[31]. Mother and her friend speculated that some of the large outbuildings and the densely wooded park around the *Schloß* Hohenbuchau might be the designated holding facility for the hundreds of Jewish men from the region. But they were mistaken. They failed to find a trace and returned home depressed after their lengthy, fruitless search.

• • •

Some time late in November 1938, Mother's cousin Hanna Rosenthal nee Michel came to visit us from Frankfurt. She was my grandfather Hermann Michel's niece, orphaned when just a small child and had been raised with Mother as if she were another daughter. Shortly after the end of World War One, she married a well-to-do businessman, Jakob Rosenthal from Wetzlar. Early on during the National Socialist years, life in the small German cities and towns became unbearable for Jewish residents, because small craftsmen and farmers had relied heavily on Jewish middlemen since the late 19th century. The Christian clients used the Jewish business partners as convenient scapegoats whenever their own business ventures were less than successful. There were many violent aggressive acts. My grandfather was beaten in spring 1933 and run out of one of the small towns in *Oberhessen* when he tried to visit one of his regular customers during the *Roßmarkt,* the seasonal outdoor horsetrading session.

Many Jewish families joined the 'preliminary internal migration' and moved from the outlying regions in the countryside to the larger cities in

30 As a German Aryan/Christian, she was still permitted to own this car, even though she was married to a Jew.

31 The castle has been torn down since then, and the grounds, including the park, are now covered with modern, handsome private homes

order to escape constant persecution and physical attacks in these smaller towns and villages. The greater anonymity in the city provided some protection for Jewish residents, for a while. The Rosenthal family, too, moved from *Oberhessen* to Frankfurt shortly after the *Machtergreifung* (the assumption of power) in January 1933. Frankfurt was a large city with a Jewish population of 25,000-plus[32]. At the time, it was the second largest and the second most important Jewish community in all of Germany. Many beautiful synagogues supported a rich Jewish cultural and religious life. Hanna was very devoted to my family, and her older brother Berthold Michel had married one of my father's cousins.

She now came to tell us that she was about to obtain the release of her husband Jakob and teenage son Hans from the Buchenwald concentration camp. The family planned to emigrate to Brazil where an older son Walter and his German Christian wife had already established a foothold in Sao Paolo. Together with another cousin, the Rosenthal family had just purchased a *facenda* (plantation) near Rolandia, north of Parana, where they planned to operate a coffee plantation. Hanna came to offer her assistance and money, if needed, hoping that we would join them on this adventure, share the anticipated hard work, and take advantage of this opportunity to escape from the obvious dangers of continued life in Germany. She was delighted to have this chance to be of help and to repay my grandparents for their many kindnesses when she was a child and a young woman.

However, a few days earlier Mother had received a telephone call from *Herr* Dr. Hans Quambusch[33], chief prosecutor *(Oberstaatsanwalt)* in the

[32] More than11.800 of these were killed; their names and dates are recorded on the wall surrounding the former Börneplatz Jewish cemetery in the center of Frankfurt.

[33] Dr. Quambusch had been an early member of the DNVP *(Deutsch Nationale Volks Partei)* which coalesced with the NSDAP. This party was Prussian oriented, legalistic in outlook, insisting on Right and Justice. They could lay claim to have made Hitler and his bullies acceptable in polite society; theirs was an older, established and respected membership.

Wiesbaden court system and a leading figure in the area's *NS Rechtsanwaltskammer,* the National Socialist bar association.

picture

When he called, *Herr Oberstaatsanwalt* Dr. Quambusch at first asked to speak to my father. At the time, Mother did not know Dr. Quambusch personally, but Father had spoken well of him in the past. She informed him that her husband could not answer the telephone because he was held in 'protective custody' at an unknown site since November 10th. In the course of the short conversation, she mentioned that he had signed a power of attorney before his arrest, and that she could speak or act on his behalf if necessary. Hearing this, Dr. Quambusch asked with some irritation if she 'could kindly explain why her husband had not applied for the available position as the only Jewish lawyer in town', the lone *Konsulent,* which was about to be assigned. The position had to be filled immediately. Apparently, my father was the only one out of fifteen local Jewish colleagues who had not applied. Mother answered that they had discussed this matter before his arrest, that Dad intended to apply for this position by the given deadline (11-30-38), but his imprisonment had kept him from doing so in a timely fashion. Dr. Quambusch told her to come to his office immediately. Mother went to the court building without delay and was ushered into the great man's office. She was nervous, even scared.

Der Stürmer article

...no more Jewish lawyers (fr.KZ Osthofen archives?)

There Dr. Quambusch handed her pen and paper and dictated a short, formal application for the *Konsulent* appointment, obtaining all necessary personal information about father's education and past experience from her. Then he asked her to sign the letter, placed it into a folder on his desk without so much as a glance and told her to go home immediately. She was to get the office cleaned up and ready to function. He assured her that her

husband would be released shortly. The job as *Konsulent* [34] was his as of this moment.[35] The members of the NS *Rechtsanwaltskammer* (bar association) had already voted to endorse him for the job. All he and they needed was this formal application. And that was now taken care of, albeit *in absentia*. Mother went home. She was simultaneously nervous, excited, hopeful, not entirely sure if she had acted in her or in my father's and all our family's best interests[36] after all.

As it turned out, the appointed *Konsulent*-attorneys did not have access to any legal recourse, to no-one's surprise. Theirs was a counseling function, more like that of a rabbi, and required entirely different sensibilities from those of an attorney-*Rechtsanwalt*. Such 'legal' representation as was permitted, initially, was quite limited since, where Jews were concerned, the Gestapo now took over the penalty function which was normally exercized by a court of law. Even if the courts, jailers, and judges had been sympathetic (and they usually were not), the Gestapo was to have the last word.

At the time when *Tante* Hanna made her generous offer, Mother must have understood and appreciated the far reaching scope of this gesture. However, she feared that, were she to follow that course now, it would be in open contradiction to the terms and the scope of the application she had

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34 *'zugelassen nur zur rechtlichen Beratung und Vertretung von Juden'* - - admitted exclusively to counsel and represent Jews

35 The *Landgerichtspräsident* made the official appointment on 11-28-38, 'per Art.III of the Fifth VO to the *Reichsbürgergesetz* , file number AV 10-17-38, DJ.S.1666, by decree of the *Oberlandesgerichts-präsident* Frankfurt, IV G 351/7.
The appointment was officially revoked as of 6-26-43 because the 'former attorney, late *Konsulent* Berthold Israel Guthmann had been evacuated on 6-16-43'.

36 Actually, as it turned out, this development drove a wedge between my parents. For years afterwards, Mother referred to the fact that 'she had been responsible for Dad's appointment as *Konsulent.* '
This was not quite factual, since she had -at best- tended to the formalities.
The groundwork had been laid by my Dad and his Christian colleagues.
But I came to feel eventually, rightly or wrongly, that she was to blame, to some extent, for much of what happened to all of us later.

just signed in Dr. Quambusch's office. She explained this predicament to *Tante* Hanna who, upon hearing this reasoning, threw her hands up in horror: "I can't believe what I am hearing," she said. "Surely, you don't trust this man, an *Oberstaatsanwalt* , a prominent member of the Nazi legal system?"

Mother and *Tante* Hanna were first cousins and had been raised like sisters, but they differed in many respects: Hanna was pretty, gregarious, smart and elegant. Mother was reserved, severe, lacking Hanna's easygoing social skills and personal warmth. However, the two were always pleasant and friendly with one another as long as I can remember, except for this one time. They were never openly affectionate. It was not in Mother's nature to be warm and demonstrative. But there never was any question about the fact that they liked and respected one another. On this day, however, the two women argued and exchanged heated words, entirely out of character for either one of them and for their normal relationship. I was puzzled, disturbed, and troubled as I observed them.

"Please do consider my offer," Hanna was almost pleading. "I am concerned about all of you. Don't you see that it's a matter of life and death? How can you be so stubborn? I want to help you and the children, as well as Berthold and your parents."

Hanna always spoke lovingly of my grandparents, especially of *Oma* (Grandmother), a sweet, intelligent, loving woman who had been like a mother to her. But my mother would not budge.

"You don't seem to understand: I have given my word to Dr. Quambusch. I can't be two-faced. It's against my nature. It would be dishonorable. I know I am speaking on Berthold's behalf. He trusted me and gave <u>me</u> his power of attorney, not you. I should be the one to make the decision. I know he will

want to take care of his clients and the members of the Jewish community above everything else. They need him now more than ever. I am working day and night to get his office ready so he can do that and to bring our apartment into some kind of livable condition. I can't just switch horses in mid-stream and prepare to go to Brazil."

"But you can't be serious," Hanna insisted. "I want to help your parents, your children, as well as you and Berthold. The other members of the congregation are all trying to flee. Everyone is leaving if they can. Even your Rabbi Dr. Lazarus has left. And in his case it's a matter of an ordained man of God, a shepherd leaving his flock! Don't you see it's a *'sauve qui peut'*, a 'save your skin if you can' time? If Berthold were only here, I am certain he would agree with me."

Mother could not be persuaded.

"Well, he is not here. And he gave me his power of attorney. That means I am speaking on his behalf and in his place."

There was, also, the question of *Großvater.* Hanna had not included him in her original offer, but she agreed that he could not be left behind and alone. She was willing to take on the four of us, both maternal grandparents, and also *Großvater* -- seven people. She was certain Mother was making a big mistake, even acting irresponsibly were she to pass up the offer. Hanna tried one more approach:

"Please, Claire, don't be blinded by one bigshot Nazi promising that he will help you. How do you know he can actually get Berthold released from his imprisonment in order to continue his work? Promises to a Jew are easily made and just as easily broken. What's more, <u>if</u> this man is actually all that influential, what does that tell you about him, really? And how much good will this work as a Jew-*Konsulent* do all of you and your family in the long run? Are you only concerned with short term goals or are you thinking of your and

your family's future? It's a matter of your and your immediate family's survival, don't you understand?

You have to think of yourself in times like these. Every one else does, can't you see that? Just look around you! Please use your eyes and ears! And think about what you are seeing. You are an intelligent woman. Use your head."

She paused to let her words sink in. Then she continued:

"I recall distinctly how critically and angrily Berthold spoke, just a few weeks ago, when he related that some of his best clients were leaving right and left to start a new life without looking back and without paying the money they owed him for legal services rendered in the past. He spoke of many specific people who left the country without paying their outstanding bills. How it made him angry when even his best friend, Fritz H., left for Palestine without so much as saying good bye or paying his debts. Haven't you been burned enough by ungrateful people? How can you risk the life of your children, your parents, your own, the entire family by being so stubborn?

If you don't mind my being so blunt, let's face it: we don't even know if Berthold is still alive. If he is unhurt and lives, here is a chance to save him and all of you -- all three grandparents, the children and both of you.

We know for a fact that the Jewish concentration camp prisoners are being released IF they can prove that they are about to leave the country. That's why Jakob and Hans and some other Jewish prisoners are being sent home. Here is your and your family's chance to go to Brazil with us.

Please, Claire, I am not married to your husband, but he may well look at things differently than you think, especially after all that you have been through recently."

Still, Mother had her mind made up. She remained firm. Stubborn.

Tante Hanna left our home very late that evening, long after I had

been sent to bed. She returned to Frankfurt with the last possible train. I suspect that she was disappointed, worried, perhaps even hurt. A few weeks later, Mother and I took a train to Frankfurt to visit her, to bid her farewell and to wish her a safe trip, shortly before the Rosenthal family left for Brazil. It was a selfconscious, awkward encounter. It was also the last time Mother and Hanna would see one another alive. Most likely, they both were well aware of this.

As time went on, I was never sure whether Mother considered the *Konsulent* appointment to be just the first step, necessary to obtain his preferential treatment in the desired release from incarceration at KZ Buchenwald. It may well be that she wanted to approach the future one step at a time, and that she wanted my father to make the ultimate decision for our family, once he was released from the dreaded camp. The line of command in our family had not included her in a decision making capacity before. She never understood that such a two-step option did not exist. As a matter of fact, she passed up our only chance at rescue and survival on that day. Lateron, I was to be quite angry with her for having made the wrong decision at this critical moment.

As it turned out, *Herr Oberstaatsanwalt* Dr. Quambusch kept his word. Shortly after his conference with Mother, he telephoned the Berlin RSHA (*ReichsSicherheitsHauptAmt*) office

picture (map)

and registered his official request with this central, highest Gestapo authority for my father's immediate release.

At the time, Father was prisoner number 24,868, one of approximately 10,000 *November-Aktion* Jewish inmates in the KZ Buchenwald near Weimar.

Like all the thousands of other prisoners, he endured endless hours standing at attention -- the sadistic, punitive roll call[37] on the fiercely cold, merciless, windblown, Ettersberg mountain top. When not working or standing in formation for this *Appell*, he worked long hours as a volunteer caregiver in the *Alte Waschküche*, a special barrack where injured, sick, and dieing inmates were housed. They were comforted by a few fellow inmates -- as much as this was possible under the circumstances. There was precious little actual caregiving, inasmuch as they had no medication at their disposal, only comforting words to offer to the beaten, bleeding, groaning, hallucinating fellow prisoners. They desperately needed bandages, doctors, pharmaceutical products, clean surroundings. Nothing of the kind was available.

On December 6th, he answered a call sent over the loudspeaker ordering *Judenhäftling* (Jew prisoner) Berthold Guthmann to report to the main office immediately. He expected punishment for some unspecified offense. To his great surprise, he was handed his discharge papers and some of the money that he had brought into the camp and told to walk to the Weimar railroad station some 5 or 6 km away, there to board the next train home. He was not to speak to anyone en route and never to discuss his camp experience with anyone in the future.

It almost did not happen: His name was called repeatedly over the intercom for a period of several days, but he did not hear it over the din inside the *Alte Waschküche* (sick bay). Another Wiesbaden friend, client and fellow inmate, *Herr* Marum, sought him out and informed him of this summons. Neither of them knew whether this call to the main office bode

[37] This sadistic form of punishment was practiced and perfected in all concentration camps. Like the detention itself, it was not intended to 'cure' or change anything. It was added torture, usually meted out by teenage guards who had chosen KZ duty over serving in the *Wehrmacht* or doing conscript labor duty as members of the NS *Arbeitsdienst*.

good or ill, but both knew that it could not be ignored. Years later *Herr* Marum tried to cash in[38] on this act of friendship (for having alerted my father to report to the *Kommandantur).*

When he arrived home, there was an emotional, grateful, joyful reunion. He looked terrible and had lost a great deal of weight. But we were happy to see him back with us alive, if not well. We had not dared to admit it, but each of us had silently feared for his life during the weeks while we were without any news from or about him . I was not even fourteen, but these weeks made me grow up in a hurry. I had never been allowed the luxury of having, showing, or sharing emotions - that was not part of the proud self control my family practiced. But on this day we all indulged in tears. We also felt guilty, because so many friends and relatives were still unaccounted for. Dad brought news about many mutual friends and got busy contacting their respective families. Dad also shared the latest news concerning my maternal grandfather: He was not doing well at all, but he was alive when last they had seen each other during the *Generalappell* on December 5th on the *Appellplatz.*

In all this misery, Dad even played cupid: one of his new friends and *Lagerbruder* was Hermann Kaiser, a fellow-prisoner/volunteer-caregiver at the Buchenwald KZ *Lager's Alte Waschküche.* Hermann Kaiser was released in mid-December 1938 because his family was able to provide the required immigration papers and a visum for the United States. He was a bachelor,

[38] In 1947, while making a misguided sales pitch to a store clerk at the State Street flagship store of my employer Sears, Roebuck & Co. in Chicago, he claimed to have 'saved my father's life in the concentration camp'. He was then trying to obtain a purchase order for some --hard to find-- nylon hosiery from a sales lady. He was not aware of the fact that large department store chains do not place orders at each location but do planned, centralized purchasing on a large scale. Especially, Sears had pioneered the system of 'known cost' production planning with established suppliers. At the time, I was working as an assistant buyer for another department at Sears home office. He knew that.
His claim was not justified and intentionally misleading, he referred to their time in Buchenwald in 1938, knowing fully well that my father was later killed in Auschwitz. His story created a lot of attention, but did not generate an order.

and Dad had spoken to him of Senny Weißmüller, *Großvater's* housekeeper. Senny was nice looking. She was a good cook. She was single. And she needed help in order to leave Germany. She had already registered with the Jewish Self-Help organizations such as the *Jüdische Frauenhilfe e.V.* in Wiesbaden and in Frankfurt, hoping that they would find her an employer in America who would be willing to offer employment and guarantee her upkeep. This was, part of the existing policy: single men were routinely approached by members of the congregational leadership or by members of the *Jüdische Frauenbund e.V.* (Jewish Women's organisation) and admonished 'Don't leave unattached Jewish women behind, if you can help it.' A few weeks later, Hermann Kaiser came to visit. Soon afterwards, he and Senny were married. Early in 1939, they left for New York. A local self-help agency there found them employment as a housekeeper/manservant team, working for a well-to-do family on Long Island. They wrote many happy letters from New York, telling us about their new life. They also tried, unsuccessfully, to help us find guarantors and affidavits, so that we might be able to leave Germany, but were rebuffed in their effort. One of Senny's younger sisters came to take her place in *Großvater's* Wiesbaden household, until she managed to leave for Palestine. Then a third Weißmüller sister, a widow, took over. Frau Emma Behrend was deported with *Großvater* and hundreds of our other dear ones on September 1, 1942 to Theresienstadt.

picture
Emma Behrend, standing in front of *Großvater*
for hours of punishing *Appell*
in the courtyard of our synagogue, waiting for the death train.

Immediately upon his arrival, Father set about helping his many clients and friends with the complicated exit formalities, finding and using the few existing escape routes[39] leading out of Germany. The maze of special taxes and assessed emigration penalties was beyond most people's comprehension.

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39 Fully half the region's Jewish population did escape

Personally, he was not doing well. He looked haggard, ashen faced and thin. He had lost a lot of weight. His head was shaven and his grey hair grew back slowly. Mother threw out all the clothes he had worn in the camp; they were filthy beyond cleaning. He had ripped out most of the lining of his lightweight overcoat, used it for bandaging the sick and wounded men in the *Waschküche,* and he used some of it as toilet paper for himself.

Once released from the camp in December 1938, my father doggedly stuck to the work he was committed to do. I shall never know whether it was genuine altruism, or whether his was a desperate and hopeless mindset from December 1938 until his death in October 1944 at Auschwitz. Most of us knew where this persecution of Jews was headed, but we did not yet know how we were going to get there. We were to find out before long.

He now put in long hours at his law office and at the newly refurbished administrative office for the congregation, a few blocks down the street, in *Frau* Strauß' apartment at *Bahnhofstraße 46.* He was available day and night for consultation with anyone who needed him. The waiting room was always filled to overflowing. Sometimes people were sitting all over our apartment, in the bedrooms, in the hallway, in the staircase. Many were crying, all were despondent. All were grateful for an occasional kind word, every ray of real or imagined hope, clinging to straws as they searched for an opportunity to escape and to survive.

It was entirely right and fitting that this newly invented profession for Jewish legal specialists did not even carry the title *Rechtsanwalt* (attorney), the job for which my father had studied, trained, apprenticed for years. A *Konsulent* was a Jewish attorney without the benefit of any law, a *Rechtsanwalt ohne Recht*. It was a personal caregiving, communal leadership

role, very much like that of a rabbi, priest or pastor. He probably thought that he had seen our fellow-Germans at their very worst during the post World War One upheavals, the endless, bloody street brawls, and the turbulent party demonstrations, the *Kundgebungen,* of the Weimar Republic years. But that was only the beginning of the unlimited, unrepentant, planned evil which awaited us.

During the Weimar Republic years, he tried as best he could to prevent the worst from happening by serving as a volunteer public speaker, teaching, debating on behalf of the Social Democratic party. Many Jewish friends who had lived in this area then told me in later years that they often feared for his life. Eugen and Edith Schönberger of the Mainz sparkling wine/*Sekt* company *Schönberger Kabinett* told me[40] of many receptions the couple hosted at this firm's headquarters[41] . They and other invited guests would toast my Dad's courage, when another such meeting was over without major incident, celebrating that he had survived yet another confrontation, unscathed, for now. Another friend, the journalist Edwin Halle, documented my father's frequent rescue work on behalf of area Jews who had been beaten up by Nazi thugs during the Weimar Republic street battles or had been sought out and attacked in their homes or places of business. Murders, blackmail, retaliatory killings were part and parcel of the national socialist party's tools and --eventually-- brought them to power. With help from another friend, writer, editor and cantor Saul Lilienthal[42] and from Edwin Halle, using Halle's car, my father helped hundreds escape to France. According to Halle, Dad saved hundreds of lives in these early years[43] .

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[40] during our first visit in fall 1950 in St. Louis, MO where he was CEO of Cooks Imperial Champagne Co, a business which had been confiscated from Henkell Trocken of Wiesbaden (my later in-law family) by the U.S. Government as enemy alien property during WW2

[41] by a strange quirk of fate, the *Schönberger Kabinett* plant was built in 1803 by Adam Henkell, founder of *Henkell Trocken*, my -later- extended in-law family (and, incidentally, Joachim von Ribbentrop's)

[42] killed at Auschwitz 10-29-1944

[43] See Edwin Halle manuscriptson file at Leo Baeck archives New York.

In the late 1930s, as things progressed and developed from bad to worse, Dad was forced to explain the unexplainable to the helpless, desperate Jewish victims of Germany's well organized government buraucracy. He had to try and defend his clients before their Gestapo jailers, at the *Arbeitsamt* (slave-conscript labor assignment office), at the *Wohnungsamt* (which enforced the harsh housing restrictions[44]), even though the outcome of the accusations, arrest, conscript labor assignments, and the evictions was usually predetermined against the victims. We all were condemned to die. I am persuaded that he believed that it was his duty to die with his clients, while trying to resist the measures to the utmost possible extent. I am sure he would have preferred to lead the congregation for which he felt responsible to some promised land. But he was a realist. And he undoubtedly knew the ultimate outcome of this unequal war since the mid-nineteenthirties. The Nürnberg Laws, at the latest, made it abundantly clear what was ahead.[45]

In fall 1936, he helped his widowed sister escape to America. He even arranged a second marriage for her, so that she and her two small children would not have to face the uncertain future alone. But the rest of us were caught in this dreadful web from which there was no escape.

For the next five years, Mother occasionally reminded him that it had been her efforts which enabled him to take on this important job. He owed her gratitude and his clients owed her thanks for having made this rescue work possible. I do not know how my father felt about these statements, but I recall that he winced whenever she made this point. The fact remains that

[44] beginning with the December 28, 1938 directive by Hermann Göring to concentrate Jews in special houses.

[45] 9-13-1935 *Gesetz zum Schutz des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre* (the law for the protection of German blood and German honor).

he helped half the Jewish residents of the area to escape. Many of these people may well have been unable to leave, otherwise. My parents did not have a happy marriage. Whether this was due to the hard times they had to endure, or whether they were not well matched, I cannot judge.

In addition to helping the younger and able bodied clients with their own emigration efforts, there was another job for him and for the congregation to do: providing for elderly parents and relatives whom the younger Jews often left behind when they left Germany. The mother and mother-in-law of Dr. Karl Kahn and his wife Emmy were typical cases in point: Dr. Kahn was a veterinarian by profession. By law[46] , he had to close his practice in the fall of 1938. In November-December 1938, he was incarcerated like all the other men, and *Frau* Kahn moved heaven and earth to obtain her husband's release from the camp. She arranged for the family's emigration to the United States. The couple's pretty daughter Marga was a year older than my brother Paul. During the lawless and turbulent days and weeks which followed *Kristallnacht*, Marga incurred a bruise on her foot which became infected. Her mother could not find or did not dare look for a Christian doctor to take care of this injury. Before her father's release from the concentration camp, Marga died of blood poisoning. Her parents were devastated. She was another victim of the *Kristallnacht* violence.

Upon his release from the concentration camp and just before leaving for Chicago, Dr. Kahn deposited all of his accounting records with my father. He requested that Dad collect the money owed him by numerous former clients and transfer fixed amounts every month to Dr. Kahn's mother and mother-in-law, Aurelie and Hedwig Kahn. There were substantial amounts due, all billed and well documented, but as yet unpaid. These were fees for professional services which he had rendered to many different farmers in

[46] Decree of July 25, 1938

the area. He hoped that the collection of these sums would provide a steady source of income for his mother Aurelie Kahn and his mother-in-law for many years to come. My brother Paul took over the routine collection procedures. For several months, he was able to raise enough cash from Dr. Kahn's debtors for the two elderly ladies' upkeep. However, this flow soon began to slow down to a trickle and, eventually, dried up completely. The various farmers did not see why they should pay some 'Jew lawyer' for the upkeep of their former veterinarian-creditor's mother and mother-in-law, when Dr. Kahn himself was in faraway *Amerika*. They decided that debts to a Jewish creditor would surely be forgiven in the Third Reich. The Jewish community tried to help its indigent members, such as these two ladies, but I recall that they suffered many hardships, like so many other elderly relatives who had been left behind. Both ladies were deported to Theresienstadt on September 1, 1942 and killed.

picture
Hedwig and Aurelie Kahn
at the slaughterhouse ramp

There were also many wives and small children left behind, whenever the obtained affidavit was inadequate, insufficient to guarantee support for an entire family. Very often, the husbands went ahead, promising to send for the family as soon as possible. Unfortunately, often this was not to be possible and the wives and children perished.

One such case was Paula Briefwechsler nee Blumenthal and her little son Walter. Paula worked for my family as a cleaning lady, maintaining our household and cleaning the office every day. Her twelve years old son came to our place after school. He ate lunch while she finished her work and did his homework in our kitchen. This short description only sounds idyllic. They sorely missed the husband and father who had been released from Buchenwald in Spring 1939, taking advantage of an affidavit, a visa, and

passage to America. There was not enough money provided to save the wife and child. Being the most endangered, seemingly, the husband went ahead, promising when he left that he would find the money and send for Paula and the little boy. She worked until the very last minute, because we were the only friends and the only 'family' she had. As a farewell gift, she washed my hair in midafternoon, a day before the death train took her 'to the East'.

Before Paula came to work for us, Karl and Gerda Simon had done this work. Like Paula, they had moved to Wiesbaden from a small town in Hessen. Karl worked in the yard and ran errands for the congregation and for Dad's office. When in 1941, Gerda became pregnant, she gave up working. Their little son was born in October 1941 and they gave him the name 'Liwie', because 'normal' names were not available to us. When they were notified of the impending deportation, they brought the baby to my parents, pleading that we hide the child and save his life. My parents discussed the pros and cons for hours, with and without the Simons. I was terribly disappointed when they finally declined. I had looked forward to having a baby to play with, but my parents explained that we all would be deported soon, ourselves. And we had no diapers, no baby food, no safe place to hide the child. Liwie was killed, as were all the others.

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I believe that Hanna Rosenthal remained sad and disappointed by the fruitless exchange with my mother. In the years that followed, as the news of the Final Solution measures trickled to the outside world, she may well have thought back to her visit with us after the *Kristallnacht* experience and her valiant attempt to help before it was too late. Once the War was over, she resumed her generous support: Almost as soon as Mother and I were released from the camp in summer 1945, she sent us many desperately needed food packages and gifts of cash from Brazil to Wiesbaden. This was

not easy, since Germans could not correspond with or receive parcels from outside the country. But Hanna found several American Jewish soldiers who were stationed in Germany with their respective military units and who were willing to risk this transgression against the occupation forces' Non-Fraternization regulations in order to help us.

Before my arrival in the United States in June 1946, she sent funds and instructions from Sao Paolo to her brother-in-law Milan Rosenthal and his wife Erna in New York, requesting that they meet my boat, the SS Marine Flatcher, at the dock. She told them to provide whatever assistance I might need. A year later, she sent her recently divorced son Hans to meet me in Chicago, fully expecting that he and I would fall in love and marry, and that I would finally move to Brazil. It did not happen. I was still trying to find my balance, to adjust to life in a normal setting, and I did not comprehend this plan at all. I politely visited with Hans once or twice, but I had no idea what was going on, what his visit was about, and did not know how to conduct myself in a normal boy-girl-relationship. I was inexperienced in 'small talk', at age twenty-one, I had never been on a date. A few years later, Hanna visited me in Detroit, where I lived with my -then- husband and our first child. She pointedly played 'grandmother' for our baby, recognizing that she was the only Jewish relative with whom this child would ever have a relationship. I am grateful for her attempt at rescue when there would have been time to escape, and for her help and undiminished devotion after the War.

As later developments have proven, Hanna was right and Mother was dead wrong: Many of the Jewish doctors, lawyers and dentists who applied for and accepted these new special positions and obligations as Jewish *Behandler* (orderlies, i.e. MD, or DDS professionals, former doctors and dentists) or as *Konsulenten* (former lawyers) chose to leave the country

soon afterwards. They abandoned their constituents, their Jewish patients and clients. They survived. Many of their patients and clients did not. My father did not leave. He and most of his clients were killed.

Our family made several futile attempts to save my brother and me. In the wake of the November 1938 *Kristallnacht* pogrom, a distant relative had escaped to Belgium and offered to take Paul and me into his and his immediate family's care. We went to *Köln* to apply for the necessary entry visas at the Belgian Consulate in summer of 1939, but the outbreak of World War Two prevented our follow-through on this offer. The relatives managed to escape to the United States, when the advancing *Wehrmacht* units overran the Low Countries. They later provided much kind hospitality when I arrived in the United States in 1946. By that time my brother Paul had been killed in Mauthausen, in March 1945, just weeks before his twenty-third birthday.

Mauthausen list

I recall writing countless letters during those years to friends and distant relatives in America, Argentina[47], in Sweden and in many other countries, begging for the required affidavits of support for my grandparents, for ourselves, and for friends and clients from Dad's office. All these pleas went unanswered or unheaded and were ultimately unsuccessful. *Großvater* was generous with his other two children who managed to escape in time, hoping that they would help him. He, too, was disappointed. He 'died' in Theresienstadt two weeks after his arrival in September 1942.

picture

my grandfather and friends boarding the train which was
to bring him and more than a thousand others to their death.

The U.S. consulates were less than helpful. Some immigrants from

[47] copy enclosed

from Germany entered the United States in 1933 and in the following years. The quota for German applicants would have permitted 25,000 visas to be issued. Many of our friends tried to visit the U.S. consulate in nearby Stuttgart in their search for immigration visas. They reported that it was 'like entering enemy teritory'. In June 1939, the SS St. Louis arrived in Miami. The passengers were desperate Jews, trying to flee Hitler's persecution. The ship's captain Gustav Schröder was told by the Immigration Service in Miami "The St. Louis will not be allowed to dock here or at any U.S. port"[48]. There was no choice but to return. The news did not surprise us. It marked a low point of non-compassion on the part of the neutral world outside our mousetrap. We were not wanted. And we knew it. The rest of the world turned a blind eye to our need. We were but bugs on the windshield of this time machine which raced forward to our ultimate destruction.

Still, we all grasped at straws:

In spring 1939, our entire family travelled to Frankfurt in order to meet with a young Mormon missionary from Salt Lake City who was living and working in that city. We had obtained his name and address from friends and hoped that he might help us plead in person our, our friends' and relatives', and Dad's clients' cause in the United States. My parents had a lengthy conversation with him. They left him a long list of names and addresses and a substantial sum of money[49]. He was to travel to the United States[50] and make contact with as many people on the list as possible and plead for help. A few weeks later, he returned empty handed. He did, however, bring us telephone books from Chicago and from New York-Manhattan, as proof that he had done as he was told. He suggested that we continue our search and use the telephone books to verify additional

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48 See *Voyage of the Damned,* by Gordon Thomas and Max Morgan Witts (New York, Stein and Day, 1974.

49 The money was provided by several wealthy clients, including *Herr Kommerzienrat* Theobald Hirschkind from Wiesbaden (deported to Theresienstadt 9-1-42 and killed).

50 It was easy for him to travel with an American passport.

addresses of friends, relatives and acquaintances. By then it was too late.

Many people tried to cross illegally into Switzerland[51] . And we heard some hair raising stories of the many betrayals and disappointments that they experienced.

One of Father's Christian former clients offered to help me. He claimed to know a German farmer near the Swiss border. He proposed that I work for this friend as a farm hand for a while. Once the Swiss border guards had gotten to know and trust me, it would be easy to just walk across the border into Switzerland, he stated. According to him, such an option existed only for me, a young girl in her mid-teens. The family discussed this offer at some length. They finally decided it was too risky. Also, Dad said that he 'did not like the way this man looked at me' and feared that I would walk into a situation potentially worse than the one we found ourselves in then. All agreed that there were advantages to being together as a family.

In view of all that happened afterwards, I don't know whether that decision was right or wrong. Some of my friends were hidden by kind people and survived. Some were sexually exploited by their rescuers. What price survival? Who is to say?

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[51] http://www.wozhomepage/spring.html; for example